

VZCZCXR07998

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2531/01 2241556

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 111556Z AUG 08

FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8784

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHDIR/RPO DUBAI 0079

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC

RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC

RUEPMNF/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002531

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2028

TAGS: PBTS PREL MARR MOPS IZ IR

SUBJECT: IRAQ: POLMIL MINSCOUNS MEETS GENERAL ABUD

REF: BAGHDAD 2414

BAGHDAD 00002531 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POL-MIL Minister Counselor Marcie B. Ries for reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) During an August 6 meeting, Baghdad Operations Center commander General Abud told POL-MIL Minister Counselor and her incoming successor that GOI knows Special Groups (SG) are armed and funded by Iran. He explained the GOI is unwilling to state so publicly in a direct manner, but would do so obliquely. Abud said GOI intelligence revealed that some SG members returned to Iraq from Iran on July 29. Abud said recent AQI-led violence was linked to negotiations over Kirkuk and upcoming elections and that security gains throughout the country were not likely to be reversed. Regarding the Sons of Iraq program, Abud said many were uncomfortable being seen by the public as USG-paid "contractors" and wanted to be brought into the police or military services. Abud said the provision of services to citizens in Baghdad had improved in recent months but people were still impatient and in need of jobs. End Summary.

SPECIAL GROUPS AND AQI

¶12. (C) At an August 6 meeting at the Adnon Palace headquarters of the Baghdad Operations Center (BOC), POL-MIL Minister-Counselor Marcie Ries introduced her successor to BOC Commander General Qanbar Hashim Khayun al-Maliki Abud. Abud said that the security situation had changed since last March, when the greatest threat was from militia groups including Iranian-trained Special Groups (SG). Abud said, however, that dangers posed by SG had not passed entirely. "We know these groups are trained in Iran," and are linked to "foreign intelligence services"; Iraqi intelligence had revealed the return of some SG members on July 29. "We are following up on that." Iraq needed to pay greater attention to its borders "to stop these people from traveling back and forth." For the moment, Abud said, his focus is on al-Qaeda, adding that al Qaeda acts simply "to prove their existence and for political reasons." Abud tied violence by al Qaeda in Iraq to negotiations over Kirkuk and upcoming elections. He concluded that despite ongoing challenges, he did not see Iraq's security situation returning to its earlier precarious state.

¶13. (C) When asked what steps the GOI intended to take in light of the recent discovery of a large cache of Iranian-made weapons, Abud said that Iran would never confess, but the GOI, had made a statement to the media in a way that "any wise person" would understand as fingering Iran. Abud said that among the weapons discovered were 81 mm mortars which he said were used by both Americans and Iranians, but the GOI was able to check and could see the difference between U.S.-made and Iranian-made mortars. The cache was found, he explained, through a citizen's tip. More and more locals were cooperating, although some citizens associated with the Sadr trend continued to challenge GOI authority. He claimed that the Sadrists lost their base in Baghdad and most residents no longer liked them. "They wish they never started the attack of late March 2008." Abud contrasted the Sadr City situation last spring - when the GOI had only a few police officers there, most of whom he said were members of Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi anyway. Now, there were five army battalions in Sadr City, controlling entrance and exit and continuing to conduct security operations.

SONS OF IRAQ

¶14. (C) Pol-Mil Minister-Counselor asked Abud about his plans to transition the Sons of Iraq (SOI - see reftel for update on the SOI program). The General stated that when initially created in 2007, plans called for the SOI to be paid by the USG for only a limited period of three months and to transition later to membership in the Police or Army. Abud

BAGHDAD 00002531 002.2 OF 002

explained that SOI members made clear to him that they no longer want to be seen as contractors paid by the USG. "The government should hire them," Abud stated. They should be made to feel like a part of the solution - a part of the government - a part of the security forces," he said, adding that they could later be rolled into police or military. At the outset of the SOI project, Abud said, there was a great deal of enthusiasm but he believed it had waned in recent months.

PROVIDING SERVICES IN BAGHDAD

¶15. (C) In response to a question on whether provision of services in Baghdad had shown improvement, Abud answered in the affirmative - but added that people were impatient and wanted results immediately. "They need to see projects going on and us creating jobs for them," he offered. Abud cited his recent visit to the Agriculture Ministry where many employees remained at home, unwilling to drive the distance to their offices in Abu Ghraib, yet still collecting full salaries. "If we can get them back to work, Abud suggested, "we can create another 5000 jobs." Abud was clearly frustrated with the level of commitment on the part of the average Iraqi civil servant. "We must raise employees to love their country, their jobs and their careers and to care about protecting their job," said Abud.

CROCKER